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ABSTRACT

An education agency's early childhood resource developer implemented and evaluated a practicum intervention designed to increase administrators' and teachers' awareness of questionable trends and practices in kindergarten education. Most of the kindergartens in the agency's area had a highly academic, lock-step curriculum; used standardized testing and screening as school entry procedures; and actively practiced redshirting and other forms of retention. Intervention consisted of the development of four research-based presentations on kindergarten trends and practices. The presentations were aired live through closed circuit television at sites in a seven county area. Sixty-four teachers and administrators registered and participated in the series of four sessions. Presentations: (1) offered an update of changes in kindergarten education and recent research findings on children's learning; (2) focused on assessment of a kindergarten program and components of a developmentally appropriate curriculum; (3) addressed the issues of testing, retention, redshirting, and 2-year kindergarten programs; and (4) reviewed the issues of grade cards, the value of observations and portfolios, and parent involvement. Evaluation data indicated that outcomes were positive. Related materials, such as surveys and questionnaires, packet descriptions, and presentation agendas, are appended. (RH)

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INCREASING THE AWARENESS OF QUESTIONABLE TRENDS AND PRACTICES IN KINDERGARTEN FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS THROUGH A SERIES OF PRESENTATIONS

by

Stephanie J. Frantz

Cluster 35

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A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Stephanie J. Frantz under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the ED.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Date of Final Approval of Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iii
LIST OF TABLES		v
LIST OF FIGURES		vi
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Work Setting and Community	1
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	2
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	4
	Problem Description	4
	Problem Documentation	4
	Causative Analysis	6
	Relationship of the Problem to Literature	8
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	12
	Goals and Expectations	12
	Behavioral Objectives	12
	Measurement of Objectives	14
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	16
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	16
	Description of Selected Solution	19
	Report of Action Taken	21
V	RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
	Results	28
	Conclusions/Discussion	31
	Recommendations	35
	Dissemination	36
REFERENCES		39

Appendices

A	Telephone Surveys.	45
B	Follow-up Questionnaire	48
C	Packet Contents.	51
D	Session Agendas.	59

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Appropriate/Inappropriate Statement Responses. 29

2 Most Frequently Mismarked Statements 30

3 Most Frequently Listed Resources 30

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1 Evidence and Objectives. 14

2 Problem and Goal Statements. 16

3 Causes and Solutions 20

ABSTRACT

Increase The Awareness Of Questionable Trends And Practices In Kindergarten For Administrators And Teachers Through A Series Of Presentations. Frantz, Stephanie., 1990: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Administrators/Early Childhood/Educational Practices/Increasing Awareness/ Inservice/Kindergarten/Teachers/Workshops.

This practicum was aimed at administrators and teachers to change practices in kindergartens by increasing the awareness of questionable practices. Objectives were to be able to identify appropriate/inappropriate practices and to increase the repertoire of available resources.

A series of four presentations were designed to provide research-based information on kindergarten trends and practices and aired live through closed circuit television at sites in a seven county area. A follow-up questionnaire to participants was used to gather data. A log of requests was kept.

Outcomes of this practicum were very positive. All three objectives were reached successfully and surpassed expectations. The practicum provided the foundation for possible long-term changes in the kindergartens of this area. The data suggests that closed-circuit television can be a successful media for reaching teachers/administrators and for increasing awareness.

Chapter I

Introduction

Description of Work Setting and Community

The work setting and this writer's skills and responsibilities are positive contributors to substantiating the problem, identifying outcomes and providing solutions to the stated problem.

The work setting is an educational agency which is one of fifteen intermediate units in the state providing a bridge between the State Department of Education and the local school districts. The agency is composed of three divisions (educational services, special education and media) who are responsible for providing support services to local school districts. Agency employees include regular and special education consultants, psychologists, speech clinicians, occupational and physical therapists, school social workers and media specialists. Support services are in the form of consultation, direct student contacts, child study teams, staff development for teachers and administrators, needs assessments, and curriculum development.

The thirty-nine public school districts and twelve private schools range from urban to rural settings. The size of districts range from one of the smallest to one of the largest is the state. Each district is concerned about its autonomy. This

agricultural state's economy has created a substantial financial problem for every district since the primary source of income for education is property taxes.

The agency offers services to all of the public and private school districts in seven counties. Children served are from birth to twenty-one for special education and from kindergarten through twelfth grade for regular education. Services are provided to school boards, administrators, teachers, parents and students. Teachers and administrators readily use the agency's services.

Writer's Role and Responsibilities

This writer has a broad background, diverse job description and numerous skills. The writer holds one of two positions of early childhood consultant for the agency with a longevity of seventeen years. This writer is thought to be an early childhood resource person by administrators, teachers, preschools and day cares throughout the seven county area. At present this writer serves as president for state's Association for the Education of Young Children.

The writer's job description includes providing staff development and developing new projects. At present this writer directly serves many of the districts and has at one time served almost all of the districts. This writer has prior experience in working

with and providing information and staff development to teachers and administrators.

The writer has within the last year attended two all day symposiums dealing with kindergarten issues. One was entitled "Testing, Tracking, Timing" and was presented at the national conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children held in November 1989 at Atlanta, Georgia. The second was attended at the Midwestern Association for the Education of Young Children held in Kansas City in March 1990 and was entitled "Conference on the Young Years". This symposium focused on retention and redshirting, achievement testing and curriculum issues. Kindergarten issues have been this writer's agenda for the last three years in the selection of individual sessions at national, regional and state conferences. This writer is well read and has carefully researched the numerous kindergarten issues.

The setting, persons involved and this writer's job are positive contributors to substantiating the problem, identifying outcomes and providing solutions to the stated problem. Teachers and administrators look to the agency to provide direction, updated best practices and current researched based information.

Chapter 2

Study of the Problem

Problem Description

There are definite kindergarten issue concerns in this geographic area. Kindergartens in the districts vary in length of day, some are half-day every day. Some are full-day alternate day, and there is a growing number of full-day every day kindergartens.

Problem Documentation

It is the opinion of this writer that administrators and teachers are engaging in questionable practices in their kindergarten programs. Most of the kindergartens in the area have a highly academic lock-step curriculum, use standardized testing and screening as entry practice, and do actively practice "redshirting" and other forms of retention. The problem appears to be that most administrators and kindergarten teachers do not have a knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices nor an awareness of the research on how young children learn.

There is growing evidence that the above issues are a problem. The number of alternative kindergartens and alternative first grades are increasing. The largest district in the area is increasing the number of alternative programs by five for the next school year. Nine districts have started alternative programs

in the last two years. The concern about the growing number of kindergarten retentions was openly discussed at a recent workshop for kindergarten teachers.

A needs assessment survey taken by the educational services division of the agency last spring and answered by 135 administrators and kindergarten teachers in this area confirmed the problem. Of those surveyed 120 indicated they did not clearly understand the definition of developmentally appropriate and wanted more information about the topic. One hundred twenty-two indicated that they were not familiar with the latest research on standardized testing of young children. Ninety-five percent of the administrators and teachers felt all children should be screened with a standardized instrument prior to school entry to determine readiness.

Many young children from upper middle and upper class families are being "redshirted". (Bredekamp, 1989; Harvard University Press, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1986) A telephone survey taken last fall of twenty of the districts with alternative programs indicated that about seventy percent of the children enrolled in alternative kindergarten programs were from upper middle and upper class families. (Appendix A) In the last five years this writer has observed that several of the larger private preschools have implemented

special programs for kindergarten age children whose parents have chose to "redshirt".

Causative Analysis

This writer believes that there are multiple causes for the questionable practices. One of the main causes is the highly structured lock-step curriculum for which teachers are being held accountable. (Roberts, 1986; Peck, McCaig & Sapp, 1988) Having the opportunity to see numerous kindergartens within this area, this writer almost always observes a very segmented curriculum. There are twenty to thirty minute blocks of time for math, social studies, science and reading. A large number of teacher directed activities and paper pencil exercises make up a great percentage of the program. These types of kindergarten programs segment and isolate learning for the child. (Bredekamp, 1987; Katz, 1988) There is growing interest and application of whole language strategies but that too is being done in isolated blocks of time. The curriculum is not an integrated one but a combination of content curriculums taught separately. Children do not learn in isolation but from child initiated activities that are related to their life experience with hands-on manipulation activities. (Bredekamp, 1987; Elkind 1989; Peck, McCaig & Sapp, 1988; Smith, 1986; Katz, 1987 & 1988).

Another cause is the misuse of tests that were designed to improve curriculum, but are being used instead, to determine readiness. (Kamil 1990) Tests such as the Brigance, Gesell, and district designed tests are being used in this geographic area. It is common practice in most districts to use a formal screening instrument to determine a child's readiness for school. Young children are not good test takers and decisions are being make on one time interactions with the child. Research has stated there is at least a fifty percent error rate in using these tests. (Hills, 1987; Kamil, 1990; National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 1987; Schultz 1989; Bredekamp 1989)

A third cause is the lack of early childhood development training for administrators and many teachers. A survey conducted two years ago by this writer indicated only 2 of 45 of the elementary principals in this area had a child development course that included birth through age eight. (Appendix A) Only seven percent of the kindergarten teachers in this seven county area have an early childhood endorsement. (Iowa State Department of Education 1987)

Another cause in the opinion of this writer is the belief by administrators and many educators that the only time children learn is when they are sitting at

desks with pencil paper tasks. Most administrators do not value the importance of play in a child's learning. Statements have been made by administrators in this area that children are not learning unless a lesson is being presented. A fifth and sixth cause, in the opinion of this writer, is that parents believe that educators do know what is best for children and are therefore not questioning kindergarten programming and the strong belief of many administrators and educators that it is the child who must be ready for school rather that the school being ready for every child.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Several organizations and educators have written about the problem. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has published Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood - Birth to Age Eight. This book which has sold well over a million copies has become the authority on Developmentally Appropriate Practice. Appropriate and inappropriate practices are listed in the areas of curriculum, evaluation, and grouping/staffing. This research based book suggests that one cause of inappropriate practices are the result of the lack of policies that reflect the most current knowledge of teaching and learning. A second suggested cause is the

emphasis on competition and comparison among children by schools.

Hatch and Freeman (1987) in a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association identified through interview analysis that "kindergarten programs are increasingly academic and skill oriented and individuals responsible for implementing these programs may not believe that their kindergartens best serve the needs of young children." They further stated "there is a gap between what the current literature calls developmentally appropriate practice and actual kindergarten practice which results in philosophy-reality conflicts." Early Childhood Curriculum: A review of Current Research (Seefeldt [Ed.], 1986) further enforces the philosophy-reality conflicts between how children learn and what is being taught.

J. Peck, G. McCaig and M.E. Sapp's Kindergarten Policies: What is Best for Children also attribute the cause of the problem to be the lack of appropriate policies. In addition, their book addresses the abuses of testing of young children and the components of an appropriate kindergarten curriculum.

The National Association of State Boards of Education issued in October 1988 their early childhood task force report, Right From the Start. The report

emphasizes the importance of the early years and the need for developmentally appropriate programs for children through the third grade.

The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in the State Departments of Education issued a position statement entitled, "Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement". The suggested causes for the unacceptable trends are: 1. the inappropriate use of tests; 2. the denial or discouragement of entrance for age eligible children; 3. the development of segregated transitional classes for children deemed unready for the next traditional level of school; and 4. an increasing use of the practice of retention.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) also have issued a position statement on student retention. (NASP 1988) The statement declares that retention has not been shown to be successful and can be harmful to children. Holmes (1986) in his five year follow-up on nonpromotion found that retention has not proven to be advantageous for children. Shepard and Smith's Boulder Valley kindergarten study (1985) found that there "was no academic benefit for extra year and, when examined there was a negative impact on socio-emotional outcomes."

The growing issue of school readiness tests is addressed by Shepard and Smith (1986) who found that school readiness tests all have error rates in the range of 50% indicating that the predictability is no better that flipping a coin. Graue and Shepard (1989) questions the predictive validity of the most used of the tests, the Gesell School Readiness Test.

There is a definite discrepancy between what is being practiced in kindergartens and what research and the literature states would enhance the learning for children. Administrators and teachers appear to be perpetuating the problem.

Chapter III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and objectives were projected for this practicum. The primary goal was to increase the awareness of the questionable trends and practices taking place in the kindergartens of this area. The end result would be teachers and administrators having a better understanding of how children learn and developmentally appropriate practices for kindergarten aged children and would hopefully begin to implement those practices.

Behavioral Objectives

It was assumed by this writer that teachers and administrators have very limited knowledge and understanding of developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood. One objective of this practicum was that one half of the participants who returned the questionnaire would show an increase in awareness of developmentally appropriate practices by identifying accurately at least half of the developmentally appropriate/inappropriate statements. A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix B. Participants were asked to respond to all the statements found in the first part of the distributed questionnaire. They were to read the list of seventeen statements and then

indicate whether the practice was developmentally appropriate or not appropriate.

The follow-up questionnaire was developed by this writer and administered following the completion of the four sessions which addressed questionable trends and practices in the kindergartens. Most of the statements regarding the questionable trends and developmentally appropriate practices section were developed from statements found in Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth -Age 8 (Bredekamp 1987) and Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement: A Position Statement (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education 1987). The remainder of the items are a synthesis from articles and research listed in the references.

It was assumed by this writer that the teachers and administrators had a limited knowledge of early childhood resources prior to the sessions. The second objective of this practicum was: the participants returning the questionnaire would be able to list at least one new resource in response to the question, "what new early childhood resources did you become aware of through these sessions?" This statement is the second part of the distributed questionnaire. This

writer referred to several references during the sessions.

The third objective was that three districts would request information about alternatives to standardized tests for kindergarten entry. A log of requests was kept by this writer during and following the implementation of the practicum. Evidence and objectives are listed in Figure 1.

EVIDENCE	OBJECTIVES
There are questionable trends and practices occurring in area kindergartens.	Half of the participants who return the questionnaire will show an increase of awareness of developmentally appropriate practices by identifying accurately at least half of the developmentally appropriate/inappropriate statements.
Misuse of screening instruments and tests.	Three districts will request alternatives to standardized testing for kindergarten entry.
Teachers and administrators have limited knowledge in early childhood education.	Participants who return the questionnaire will list at least one early childhood resource.

Figure 1. Evidence and Objectives

Measurement of Objectives

Objective one will be accomplished if the majority of the questionnaires returned when tallied do

identify correctly 8 of the 17 developmentally appropriate/not appropriate statements.

Objective two will be accomplished if the participants returning the questionnaire list at least one early childhood resource in response to that question on the survey.

The third objective will be met if by reviewing the writer's log three districts have requested alternatives to standardized tests for kindergarten entry.

A journal was kept during the implementation to record thoughts, ideas, concerns and information that was used to gather data during the practicum.

Chapter IV

Solution of Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

It is the opinion of this writer that administrators and teachers in this area are engaging in questionable practices in their kindergarten programs. Most of the kindergartens in the area have a highly academic lock-step curriculum, use standardized testing and screening as entry practice, and do actively practice "redshirting" and other forms of retention. The problem appears to be that most administrators and kindergarten teachers do not have a knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices nor an awareness of the research on how young children learn. The problem was considered and the goal of the practicum created as indicated in Figure 2.

PROBLEM	GOAL
The problem is the questionable trends and practices in the kindergartens.	The goal is to change administrator and teacher practices in the kindergartens by increasing awareness of questionable practices.

Figure 2. Problem and Goal Statements

Solutions to the problem all focused on ways of providing information to administrators and kindergarten teachers. During the last few years, early childhood authorities have inundated the

literature with articles on early childhood issues. This has met with some success particularly in planting seeds of thought in the minds administrators and teachers. In this state some workshops have been held on early childhood topics with some success but of limited interest to administrators.

In seeking possible solutions this writer researched communication methodology. While reviewing the literature a former Nova University practicum was discovered that successfully used videos to increase awareness. (Operach 1987) Petty and Cacioppo (1986) stated that "people are best able to process complex arguments when they are well informed and have a systematic understanding of the issue." They also suggest the use of repetition when introducing issues. Martel (1989) in his book on persuasive edge suggests using "message elaboration" as a means of changing attitudes. In this writer's opinion both books suggest the value of doing a series rather than a one-shot presentation if one wants to impact changes.

Several solutions came to mind. More articles could be shared particularly in the agency newsletter that is distributed four times a year to all district administrators and to all teacher lounges. An area workshop could be planned. Packets of information could be developed and distributed. A series of

sessions could be presented on closed-circuit television.

Articles in the agency newsletter can be used and should be used, but it is the opinion of this writer that a more specific in depth type of information sharing is needed first. This idea can certainly be used in conjunction with another solution. There would be no additional cost for this solution.

An area workshop is also a good idea. Workshops, however, are one shot attempts and there is more information on this topic than can be comfortably absorbed in a single setting. It is the opinion of this writer that a more gradual, longer solution might have more impact and greater benefits. A workshop might be more effective after some groundwork is laid and information shared. Cost is also a factor. It is the opinion of this writer that an outside expert is almost always more effective on controversial issues than local talent. This solution would involve added costs to the agency and funding would need to be explored.

Packets of information are important and does organize information for individuals, but the information may not be read without more interest developed and background laid. Packets could certainly be part of another solution. Additional monies might

be needed sought depending on the extent of the packets and the level of distribution.

The agency has recently implemented a closed circuit television network and this is available to staff. There are seventeen viewing sites in the seven county area. These sites are usually in a school district building. This writer is not experienced using this form of media, but it does seem to offer a new mode of reaching teachers and administrators. A series of sessions can be planned which offers an opportunity to build knowledge and information over a period of time.

Description of Selected Solution

What kept coming to this writer's mind was that adults like children need the environment planned and materials close and readily available. Causes and solutions were considered and appear in Figure 3.

This writer chose to present a series of four hour long sessions on the closed circuit television network. This series was titled, "Questionable Trends and Practices in the Kindergarten". Each session had a separate focus but built on prior information with emphasis on what research says. There were two weeks between sessions. The first session offered an historical update of what has happened in kindergartens, as well as what research tells us about

how children learn. The second session focused on assessing a kindergarten program and components of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. The third session addressed the question of testing, retention, "redshirting" and two year kindergarten programs. The fourth and final session looked at grade cards, the value of observations and portfolios, and parent involvement.

CAUSES	SOLUTIONS
Lack of developmentally appropriate kindergartens	Research based information on developmentally appropriate practices.
Highly academic curriculums	Research based information on developmentally appropriate curriculum and how young children learn
Abuse of tests with young children	Research based information on testing and alternatives to testing
Increase of retention and alternative programs	Research based information on retention and "redshirting"

Figure 3. Causes and Solutions

Two packets of information were developed. A list of packet contents can be found in Appendix C. The PACKET ONE was distributed to participants prior to the first session and PACKET TWO between the third and fourth sessions. PACKET ONE contained some background

information relating to SESSION ONE and TWO plus a reference listing. PACKET TWO was the direct result of requests in addition to background information relating to SESSION THREE and FOUR.

The format of the sessions included lecture, visuals and opportunities for dialogue. Throughout the sessions information was presented on questionable practices and the research base for questioning these practices. Solutions to these practices was also discussed. The content of the sessions were directly related to accomplishing the goal and objectives by providing organized, research based information with opportunities for dialogue. This writer provided additional information to participants upon request and was available for consultation to districts. The solution was conducted over a three month period with analysis of the data following receipt of the evaluation questionnaires.

Report of Action Taken

WEEK ONE of implementation was spent with setting presentation dates, scheduling rooms and filling out appropriate agency forms. The series was scheduled for Thursdays from 4 to 5 in the late afternoon. An information and registration flier was developed and printed. Appropriate mailing labels for elementary administrators and kindergarten teachers were requested

and obtained. A journal was started and the first entry was - be sure to arrange secretarial help to receive registrations and fend phone calls. Articles and information from this writer's extensive literature search was organized for each session topic.

WEEK TWO involved adhering mailing labels and distributing fliers early in the week. Two sets of mailing labels were created with one put aside for the second mailing. The content of PACKET ONE was formalized. Appendix C lists the contents of the packets. Materials were gathered. NAEYC brochures were already available in the agency. When ordering these brochures allow at least two weeks for delivery. Excerpts from Rogers and Sawyers' Play in the Lives of Children and the Resource List was compiled. Completed originals were sent to the print shop.

WEEK THREE found this writer working on the agenda for the first session, gathering resources, and developing needed overheads. Registrations were coming in and a registration list was forming. Mailing labels for registrants were created on computer.

The beginning of **WEEK FOUR** was spent stuffing packets, adhering labels and distributing packets. Registrations were still coming so with each registration PACKET ONE was sent out immediately. A

journal notation was to be sure to allow a large block of time for stuffing packets.

This writer met with the television crew to discuss stage set up and procedures, as well as, acquiring tips for presenting using this media. What an invaluable meeting this was. Furniture arrangement, overhead placement and camera settings and placement were decided. Three cameras were used so instructions were needed as well as decisions on the best camera angles for overhead displays and close-up shots of the resources. On the suggestion of television crew, this writer decided to use printed headings with each session. These headings need to be created ahead of time and then the camera operator needs to be cued for appropriate usage. It was determined that three days before each presentation the writer would meet with the camera operator to discuss the list of headings to be used. The camera operator and the writer also adopted the practice of meeting one hour prior to the actual presentation to set up and cue the heading uses. The writer continued to polish SESSION ONE during the remainder of this week.

WEEK FIVE was presentation week for SESSION ONE which occurred on Thursday. A list of headings was delivered to the camera operator on Monday. Overheads and script was finalized. There were sixty-four

registrations representing thirty of the thirty-nine school districts. This number was higher than was anticipated. At the last minute the camera operator and this writer decided to video tape the sessions so it could be critiqued. This writer would strongly suggest planning for video taping.

SESSION ONE was a learning experience. This session focused on presenting a common knowledge base of terminology, a historical update of what has happened in kindergarten and how children learn from a research perspective. The writer chose to present information from a variety of sources and refrained from personal opinion. **SESSION ONE** agenda is found in Appendix D. An unanticipated event was the hesitation of participants to use their microphones to ask questions and resulted in a number of questions being generated through phone calls following the session. The presentation appeared to be well received and the questions were for more information and the sharing of printed documentation for participants to use in their settings. Because a number of the requests were the same, the beginning of the second session was used to share additional resources and answer some follow-up questions. A second unanticipated reaction was this writer's own reaction to making a presentation without a live audience. When one is accustomed to assessing

body language and adjusting accordingly, to not have that feedback was a very different and challenging experience and adjustment. The first tape was requested for viewing by a registrant the day after the first presentation.

The beginning of **WEEK SIX** was spent analyzing the information and feedback from **SESSION ONE**. The video of the session offered this writer the opportunity to do a self critique and two colleagues also critiqued the session. Overall the feedback and critiques of **SESSION ONE** indicated a positive reception. This writer did recruited a couple participants to be a live audience during the remainder of the sessions.

The remainder of **WEEK SIX** and beginning of **WEEK SEVEN** was spent preparing for **SESSION TWO**. About an hour was spent with the camera crew and minor camera positioning was adjusted. Visual headings were discussed and submitted for production. The routine of critiquing the past session and preparing for the next became the practice following each of the sessions.

SESSION TWO was presented during **WEEK SEVEN**. This session focused on assessing a kindergarten program and sharing the components of a developmentally appropriate program. The agenda for this session is included in Appendix D. This writer felt that there was too much information to present and absorb in just one hour.

There really needs to be a series developed on just this topic. The participants did ask more questions during the discussion portion. According to the feedback received it did seem to provide a framework of understanding for the participants.

SESSION THREE was presented during **WEEK NINE** and addressed the question of testing, retention, "redshirting" and two year kindergarten programs. The session agenda is included in Appendix D. Whether it was the topic or the comfort level of the participants, more dialogue occurred during this session than the others. An unanticipated event occurred. The video equipment malfunctioned during filming resulting in no tape of this session. This writer and the cameraman scheduled a time the next day to simulate the material from that session so that the series would be complete. During the week following the presentation there were several requests for the sharing of written information on the topic of testing and for the articles on retention and "redshirting". Requests for alternatives to kindergarten entry tests were received. Requests for the video on this topic was also received from nonparticipating administrators.

WEEK TEN, in addition to the already established routine, was spent printing material for **PACKET TWO** and

the mailing of that packet to participants. Contents of **PACKET TWO** can be found in Appendix C.

SESSION FOUR was presented during **WEEK ELEVEN**. The focus of this presentation included a look at grading, the values of observations and portfolios, and the importance of parent involvement. The agenda can be found in Appendix D. The participants continued to demonstrate a comfort level by participating in more dialogue and asking more questions. This session ran an hour and a half. This was not planned but was able to occur because for the first time there was not a scheduled program following the presentation.

The **FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRES** began arriving during **WEEK TWELVE**. Journal entries were analyzed, tallied and organized. Prints were made of the videos. The demand for the videos were certainly unanticipated. The amount of additional clerical time for handling requests was also not anticipated. **FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRES** continued to arrive during **WEEK THIRTEEN**. A tabulation of the data occurred the end of this week.

Chapter V

Results, Discussion and Recommendation

Most of the kindergartens in the area have a highly academic lock-step curriculum, use standardized testing and screening as entry practice, and do actively practice "redshirting" and other forms of retention. The problem appeared to be that most administrators and kindergarten teachers did not have a knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices nor an awareness of the research on how young children learn. As a solution to the above problem, this writer chose to present a series of four hour long sessions on the agency's closed circuit television network. The title of this series was "Questionable Trends and Practices in the Kindergarten." Although each session had a separate focus, they were interrelated and the information shared had a research base for questioning each of the practices. The goal of this practicum was to increase the awareness of questionable trends and practices taking place in the kindergartens of this area. It was the hope of this writer that teachers and administrators would begin to question these practices and would hopefully seek to change to developmentally appropriate practices.

Results

A total of 64 teachers and administrators registered and participated in the series of four

sessions. Participants represented 30 of the 39 school districts served in this area. All 17 viewing sites, located throughout the seven counties, were used. Three objectives were listed for this practicum and all three were met.

The first objective was that one half of the participants who returned the questionnaire would show an increase in awareness of developmentally appropriate practices by identifying accurately 8 of 17 developmentally appropriate/inappropriate statements. This objective was met after tallying the 57 questionnaires returned by 11 administrators and 46 teachers. The questionnaire and what this writer judged as correct responses can be found in Appendix B. Table 1 indicates the breakdown of respondents.

Table 1. Appropriate/Inappropriate Statement Responses.

	Administrators	Teachers	All
All responses correct	1	14	15
One incorrect responses	3	21	24
Two incorrect responses	2	4	6
Three incorrect responses	2	4	6
Four incorrect responses	1	2	3
Five incorrect responses	2	1	3
Total	11	46	57

A listing of the most frequently mismarked statements is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Most Frequently Mismarked Statements

15	Curriculum emphasis is primarily on the intellectual development of the child.
15	Activities need to be teacher directed.
12	Most activities are done as a whole group.
12	"Redshirting" is practiced and encouraged.
9	Work and play is divided.
6	All children are required to participate in all activities.

The second objective was that participants returning the questionnaire would be able to list at least one new resource in response to the written question, "what new early childhood resources did you become aware of through these sessions?" This objective was met when all of the 57 questionnaires returned listed at least two resources. 22 listed two, 19 listed three, 15 listed four and one listed five. Table 3 displays the most frequently listed resources.

Table 3. Most Frequently Listed Resources

67	NAEYC brochures (listed by name or as a group)
59	NAEYC brochure - "Appropriate Education in the Primary Grades" (listed specifically by name)
55	Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Bredekamp, 1987)
43	Kindergarten Policies: What Is Best For Children? (Peck & others, 1988)
41	Young Children Journal
38	National Association for the Education of Young Children
35	Right From the Start (NASBE, 1988)

The most frequently listed resource by both teachers and administrators was the NAEYC's brochures. The most

frequently listed resource from the 11 administrators was Kindergarten Policies: What Is Best For Children. "Appropriate Education in the Primary Grades" was second. Among the teachers NAEYC brochures were listed the most often with "Young Children" second.

The third objective was that three districts would request information about alternatives to standardized tests for kindergarten entry. A tally of requests kept in this writer's journal revealed that to date seven districts have requested information concerning alternatives to standardized tests for kindergarten entry thus meeting this objective. A review and tally of the journal entries kept throughout the implementation of this practicum also revealed requests from 26 separate districts for addition materials and information.

Conclusions/Discussion

The response to the offering of these sessions was higher than expected indicating there was an interest in the topic. Attendance was not taken at each session because of the time restraint with the amount of information needing to be covered in just an hour. Therefore there is no information of how many sessions each person attended or if there were additional persons gathered at the seventeen sites. The high number of returned questionnaires seems to indicate a

high attendance. With 30 of 39 school districts represented, it can be concluded that there is now information about the questionable practices in 30 of the 39 school districts.

This writer assumed that administrators and teachers were displaying questionable practices because of a lack of knowledge and information. The fact that all respondents were successful in identifying correctly 12 or more of the 17 appropriate/ inappropriate statements indicates there is an awareness of what is developmentally appropriate/ inappropriate for kindergarteners. Because no information as to the specific level of awareness was gathered prior to the series, the amount of gain in awareness is not known.

In reviewing the items mismarked on the questionnaire, these appear to be strongly related to past practice. The items are: curriculum emphasis is primarily on the intellectual development of the child; activities need to be teacher directed; most activities are done as a whole group; "redshirting" is practiced and encouraged; and work and play is divided. These same ideas generated the most discussion and questions during the sessions. It should also be noted these same items were the ones that prompted editorials comments on the questionnaire even when the correct

response was circled. It could be that there is confusion in the interpretation of these items. It might mean some resistance to change concerning these items. Without further investigation one should be hesitant to draw specific conclusions.

The number of resources listed by respondents of the follow-up questionnaire does indicate new resource information was gained as a direct result of the sessions. The most frequently listed resources were shown and used in at least three of the four sessions. This writer feels that by visually showing these and quoting from them at multiple sessions possibly helped in drawing attention to these specific resources. The large number of requests for specific articles used during the sessions has resulted in the development of a three-ring notebook that contains all the articles referenced during the sessions. This notebook is available for viewing at the agency curriculum lab.

The session that has generated the most response was session three on testing, retention, "redshirting" and alternative programs. This writer was asked to respond to that session at a recent elementary principal meeting. It was the perception of this writer at the beginning of that meeting, most of the administrators felt that "redshirting" and alternative programs (alternative kindergarten, junior

kindergarten, special kindergarten) were not a form of retention nor were they an inappropriate practice. By the end of the meeting, many were beginning to question the practices. As a group they are requesting addition information on developmentally appropriate practices for themselves and teachers. A continuation of the discussion is scheduled for later this year with the focus on alternatives to testing.

The video tapes of the sessions were a last minute addition to the practicum, but were a definite asset. The tapes have been requested by participants who missed a session, participants who wanted to share the sessions and non-participants who heard about the sessions. They were also beneficial to this writer to critique sessions.

Using the media of closed circuit television should be discussed from the prospective of this writer. This vehicle has the advantage of providing information to a large group without the time and cost of travel to a central location. Information can be given verbally and visually and does offer the opportunity for two-way auditory communication. The disadvantage is for a group of persons who have not been together previously feeling comfortable about using the two-way communication system. From this writer's experience, discussion and questions were

harder to obtain through this media than in face to face large or small group presentations.

Interest appeared to grow with each session. This was evident by the questions generated during the sessions and by the phone calls and requests between sessions. A case might be made for a series of presentations rather than a single "one-shot" workshop. Allowing two weeks between sessions may have allowed for additional reading or discussion of material among colleagues. This appears to have happened as requests were made by 14 persons who were not registered for the series.

This writer does believe that the goal of the practicum to increase the awareness of questionable trends and practices in the kindergartens for administrators and teachers was successful. The series of four sessions on closed circuit television was an appropriate vehicle for presenting information. This conclusion can be drawn from the above discussion and because all three objectives were met above expectation.

Recommendations

From this experience, this writer would make the following recommendations:

1. The presenter does need to work closely with the filming crew and this writer would recommend a mock session prior to actual sessions.
2. Video taping sessions and critiquing is strongly urged and needs to be planned in advance because of the additional equipment needed.
3. When considering using this solution a pre/post questionnaire would have been helpful in measuring gains. The items mismarked on the pre-questionnaire should then be analyzed and possibly would yield information to the presenter as to the level of awareness of participants on individual issues.
4. There is not specific evidence to indicate the next recommendation except for the personal feeling of this writer. If the series were redone, this writer would add video clips of classrooms to the agenda for the second session on developmentally appropriate practices. Some visual contrasts between questionable practices and appropriate curriculum/programming might have a greater impact than just verbal quotes.

5. Once awareness is created this writer feels it is important to continue to provide information and opportunities to discuss issues.

Dissemination

The unplanned products of this practicum are being disseminated. The three-ring notebook that contains all the articles referenced during the sessions is available for viewing at the agency curriculum lab. There is an early childhood notebook being development for elementary principals that will include many of the articles and references.

The video tapes of the sessions are also available for check-out and have be requested. This writer's Nova cluster has requested viewing the session on testing, "redshirting", and alternative programs.

It appears the practicum was just the beginning. Ongoing information will be a regular part of the agency newspaper that is distributed four times a year. Related topic workshops/conferences are being planned for both administrators and teachers. There have also been several requests from individual school districts to make presentations to staff and school boards concerning kindergarten issues.

Because this writer had not considered using closed circuit television prior to this project and found it a successful media, there is thought of

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Because this writer had not considered using closed circuit television prior to this project, there is thought of submitting a shortened version of this report to ERIC/EECE.

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#576 Play Is FUNdamental (1987)
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APPENDIX A

TELEPHONE SURVEY

SURVEY I

Conducted Spring of 1989 by this writer.

45 elementary principals in this seven county area were surveyed

Question

Have you ever had a child development course included these early childhood years?
infants (birth to age three)
preschoolers (age three to age five)
kindergarten to age eight

Results

	yes	no
Birth to age three	0	45
Preschoolers	0	45
Kindergarten to age 8	28	17

SURVEY 2

Conducted Spring of 1989 by this writer

20 Principals from 20 districts were contacted by telephone by this writer

Question:

What percentage of children having attended your alternative kindergarten program are from lower income families...middle income families....upper middle/upper income families?

Results

Principal	Lower	Middle	Upper middle/upper
1	10	80	10
2	15	75	10
3	20	20	60
4	15	15	70
5	70	15	15
6	75	15	10
7	0	25	75
8	0	30	70
9	10	65	25
10	0	70	30
11	80	20	0
12	15	75	10
13	10	50	40
14	20	80	0
15	15	75	10
16	25	50	25
17	30	40	30
18	40	30	30
19	5	75	20
20	15	75	10

QUESTIONABLE TRENDS AND PRACTICES IN KINDERGARTEN

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Circle one: I am a: TEACHER ADMINISTRATOR

Mark each of the following statements about kindergarten practice and programming as:
1 - Developmentally Appropriate
2 - Developmentally Inappropriate

1	2	Schools should be ready for all children rather than all children ready for school.
1	2	Play is an important part of a kindergarten curriculum.
1	2	"Redshirting" is practiced and encouraged.
1	2	Worksheets, workbooks, dittos, and flash cards are frequently used.
1	2	All children are required to participate in all activities.
1	2	Curriculum areas are integrated.
1	2	Preparing the environment is important to learning.
1	2	Curriculum emphasis is primarily on the intellectual development of the child.
1	2	Most activities are done as a whole group.
1	2	Curriculum and instruction are responsive to individual differences.
1	2	Work and play is divided.
1	2	Standardized test determines promotion.
1	2	Activities need to be teacher directed.
1	2	A child's progress is reported in narrative form.
1	2	Curriculum subjects are in specific time blocks.
1	2	Children freely move from activity to activity.
1	2	The curriculum includes time to learn and practice social skills.

PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE

What practices in your kindergarten do you consider questionable?

How would you change those questionable practices?

What early childhood resources did you become aware of through these sessions?

What additional information would be helpful to you?

APPENDIX C

CONTENT OF PACKETS

PACKET ONE

NAEYC Brochures
- #522 "Good Teaching Practices for 4- and 5-Year Olds"
- #224 "Appropriate Education in Primary Grades"
- #582 "Testing of Young Children: Concerns and Cautions"
- #771 "Toys: Tools for Learning"
- #772 "Play Is FUNdamental"

Ordered from
NAEYC
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009-5786
$10.00 per 100

Excerpts compiled from Rogers & Sawyers' Play in the Lives of Children

Resource List and ordering information

PACKET TWO

Newsweek article "How Kids Learn"

"How Best to Protect Children From Inappropriate School Expectations, Practices, and Policies" by Bredekamp and Shepard

"Behind" Before They Start?" by Rosalind Charlesworth

Complete reference of all articles and resources mentioned during sessions

Evaluation Questionnaire

APPENDIX D

SESSION AGENDAS

SESSION 1 - AGENDA

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Intro

Thank audience for signing up
Introduce self and give personal background

What I hope to accomplish through sessions

1. To develop a greater understanding and knowledge base in thinking about kindergarten programming and the kindergarten youngster

2. To provide a common understanding of terms related to kindergarten and young children

3. To advocate for young children and promote developmentally appropriate programming for all children

4. To provide you with a variety of resources for your use as each of you look at kindergarten programming

Share what will be covered in each session (overhead)

Session 1 - Will deal with identifying the concerns/issues and a look at early childhood nationally and in our state through the sharing of Iowa's Kindergarten/Prekindergarten Task For Report, the National Association of State Boards of Education Task force Report, and the effect of the Excellence in Education Report on Kindergartens.

Session 2 - Will focus on assessing your kindergarten program and sharing the components of a developmentally appropriate curriculum

Session 3 - Will address the question of testing, retention, "redshirting", and two year kindergarten programs.

Session 4 - Will cover grading, the value of observations and parent involvement.

Some resources to become familiar with: (use overhead, show books/reports and talk about)

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth - Age 8 by Bredekamp

Kindergarten Policies: What is Best for Children by Peck, McCaig and Sapp

Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement: A Position Statement by National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Department of Education

Right From the State by the National Association of State Boards of Education

Iowa Prekindergarten/Kindergarten Task Force Report by the Iowa State Department of Education

Review and talk about the NAEYC brochures that were sent in the first packet

Good Teaching Practices for 4 and 5 Year Olds
Appropriate Education in the Primary Grades
Play is FUNdamental
Toys: Tools for Learning
Testing of Young Children:Concerns and Cautions

Terms (use overhead)

EARLY CHILDHOOD - birth to age 8

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE - Read from page 2 of NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practices...: 1) age appropriateness 2) individual appropriateness

PLAY - A child's primary vehicle for and indicator of their mental growth. Play enables children to progress along the developmental sequence from sensorimotor intelligence of infancy to preoperational thought in the preschool years to the concrete operational thinking exhibited by mid-primary age children. (Bredekamp, 1986 p.3)

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO KINDERGARTEN?
An Historical Update/perspective

Read excepts from "What Has Happened to Kindergarten" Education Leadership, November 1986

National Focus

Mention the "Excellence in Education Report"
First focused on high schools, then to middle schools, then to elementary schools and now appears to be focusing on kindergarten and early childhood

NASBE Report - share book Right From the Start - read the two goals (p.4 and 6)

State Focus

Share Pre-kindergarten/Kindergarten Task Force Report
Already two recommendations have occurred since that report. One was the hiring of a state early childhood consultant - the state hired two in the past year. The new state education standards allow for four year olds in the public schools.

What do we know about kindergarten children?

Share the bimodal curve from Werner's Early Prevention of School Failure. Data was collected on 50,000 kindergarten students. Curve represents a typical class of 25. Compare this curve with the normal understanding of the bell curve. (overhead)

Share thoughts and ideas about the kindergarten child that were gleaned from child development theorists and early childhood experts and that have been confirmed through personal observation and experience

QUESTIONS

Summarize session area

Describe next session - What is a developmentally appropriate curriculum?

Thank Them

SESSION 2 - AGENDA

What is a developmentally appropriate curriculum?

Review information generated by phone calls

Review Terms using overhead

New term - CURRICULUM

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS DURING THE KINDERGARTEN DAY, INCLUDING DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES, FREE PLAY, RECESS, CHILD-DIRECTED ACTIVITIES, TEACHER-DIRECTED ACTIVITIES, INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ACTIVITIES, ROUTINES, SNACKS, ALL ASPECTS OF THE CHILD'S DAY AT SCHOOL

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION CONCERNS WHETHER THE CHILD SHOULD BE FITTED TO THE CURRICULUM OR THE CURRICULUM FITTED TO THE CHILD!!!

Share excerpts from Kindergarten Policies: What is Best For Children curriculum and learning (p. 31)

Share excerpts from Public School Early Childhood Programs by ASCD (p.9-10) - Kindergarten has three important functions

Share excerpts on Kindergarten Curriculum Components from Kindergarten Policies... (p.31-51)

Review Curriculum Goals and Strategies from Appropriate Education in the Primary Grades and Good Teaching Practices for 4 and 5 Year Olds brochures

Curriculum really needs to be:

INTEGRATED MULTI-SENSORY THEMATIC

Share excerpts from TexasAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Kindergarten reading Programs

Discuss the appropriateness of:

the Whole Language Approach to an integrated language arts curriculum

Using math manipulatives and Math Their Way strategies and techniques

Discuss integrating the whole curriculum through a thematic approach

Share Lilian Katz' book Engaging Children's Minds: the Project Approach and Gamberg and others' book Learning and Loving It

Share some other thematic resources:

Bringing It All Together - Cheryl Saur
Channels to Children - C.Beckman, R. Simmons, & N.Thomas
Mudluclous - Jan Irving
Glad Rags - Jan Irving

Read Policies for Kindergarten p.52 of Kindergarten Policies

Questions

Summarize session

Next session topic - TESTING, RETENTION, "REDSHIRTING" AND TWO YEAR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

End with quote from Kindergarten Policies p.5

INSTEAD OF ASKING "ARE THE CHILDREN READY FOR KINDERGARTEN?; IT IS MORE APPROPRIATE TO ASK "ARE OUR KINDERGARTENS READY FOR THE CHILDREN"

SESSION 3 -AGENDA

Testing, Retention, "Redshirting", Two Year Kindergartens

OVERVIEW

Some of the practices that are being questioned appear to have been caused or have resulted from the trend of demanding more and more of kindergarten children

1. inappropriate uses of screening and readiness tests
2. denial or discouragement of entrance for eligible children
3. the development of segregated transitional classes (ie. alternative kindergartens, developmental kindergartens, transitional 1st grades)

What now appears to be common practice:children must be made ready for the program, in contrast to tailoring the program to the strengths and needs of the children

Show stack of articles/books and mention the wide variety of sources

From Young Children
"How Best to Protect Children From Inappropriate School Expectations" by Bredekamp
"Behind Before They Start" by Charlesworth

From Educational Leadership
"Forcing Works For Flowers, But Not For Children by Doremus
"Synthesis of Research on School Readiness and Kindergarten Retention" by Shepard and Smith

From Early Childhood Quarterly
"Predictive Validity of Gesell School Readiness Tests" by Graue & Shepard

From ERIC Digest
"Hothousing Young Children"

From NAEYC
Achievement Testing in the Early Grades: The Games Grown-ups Play by Kamii
Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: A Guide by Meisels

From Phi Delta Kappan
"Testing and Retention of Young Children: Moving From Controversy to Reform" by Shultz

Shepard & Smith's - Boulder Valley Kindergarten Study: Retention Practice and Retention Effect

TESTING

Share excerpts from NAEYC's brochure Testing of Young Children: Concerns and Cautions

Types of Testing
Why is standardized testing inappropriate for young children?

Share some excerpts from Meisels' Developmental Screening

Quote from Kindergarten Policies p. 17

Share excerpts from Kamil's Achievement Testing in the Early Grades: The Games Grown-ups Play

RETENTION

Quote from NASP Position Statement of Student Retention

Share excerpts from "Synthesis of Research on School Readiness and Kindergarten Retention" by Shepard & Smith

Share excerpts from Holmes' A Synthesis of Recent Research on Nonpromotion: A Five Year Follow-up

TWO YEAR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS
(developmental kindergarten, junior kindergarten, alternative kindergarten, alternative 1st grade)
and
"REDSHIRTING"

Share ASCD Public School Early Childhood Programs p.9

Share excerpts from "Synthesis of Research on School Readiness and Kindergarten Retention" by Shepard & Smith

Share p. 8-9 Kindergarten Policies

Share excerpts from NAECS/SDE "Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement: A Position Statement"

The literature considers "Redshirting" and two year kindergarten programs to both be forms of retention with some of the same negative results!

Questions?

Summarize session

Give overview of final session
- Grading
- Observations
- Involving Parents

Second Packet will be arriving next week. There is an evaluation form included. Please fill it out and return after the last session.

Thank them

SESSION 4 - AGENDA

Grading, Observations, Involving Parents

Talk about Packet 2 and EVALUATION FORM

GRADING

Read from Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs... p. 75

Share information from Iowa Prekindergarten/Kindergarten Task Force Report

Read from Insult to Intelligence by Frank Smith
pp. 182-183 No Grades
pp. 259-260 How can teachers tell that students are learning without grades and tests
Share from Kamii's Achievement Testing in the Early Grades... Chapters 11 and 13

What can be done instead:
Develop checklists that are based on objectives of a developmentally appropriate curriculum (be sure the objectives cover all areas of development

Develop individual portfolios that include samples of a child's work (art work, writing, dictated stories, etc.)

Use of video taping and cassette recordings

OBSERVATIONS

Read from Dale & Jacobson's The Child As Thinker--Qualitative Approaches to Observation on why to observe

Share Ludke's "What to Look For When Observing"

INVOLVING PARENTS

The literature is very clear about the benefits of parent participation and strongly supports the practice

Share Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Program... p. 75

Reasons for involving parents taken from the literature
- Parents are a child's primary teacher
- Parents know the child better than you do
- Parents want the best for their child
- Parents are your consumers
- More involvement reaps greater generalization for the child's learning
- More involvement reaps sustaining gains for the child
- Parents are the greatest advocates for your program
- Parents can help meet some of your manpower needs
- Parents need your support and expertise

Effective ways to involve parents
- Brainstorm list of ways to involve parents on overhead

Questions/open agenda

Review the major resources used during the series

Remind them to fill out evaluation

Thank them for participating